NewsRelease

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NASA EDUCATIONAL SHOW TO FEATURE ARECIBO OBSERVATORY

As part of NASA's mission to inspire the next generation of explorers, NASA Langley Research Center in Hampton, Va., and the Arecibo Observatory in Arecibo, Puerto Rico, will help students plan an out-of-this-world vacation – an imaginary trip through the solar system and beyond.

The Case of the Galactic Vacation, scheduled to air May 14, will be filmed in Puerto Rico, March 10-14. In the show, co-star, Bianca Baker is an intern at the Arecibo Observatory, one of the world's most powerful radar-radio telescopes. With the help of the Director, Daniel Altschuler, Bianca will learn about the planets in our solar system and how the observatory is used to search for signs of extraterrestrial life.

Bianca and the tree house detectives also get help from fifth grade students at the Antonio Gonzalez Suarez Bilingual School in Añasco, Puerto Rico, where they learn how to measure distance in space to better understand space travel and its future.

To plan this imaginary journey through space, the tree house detectives will interview a number of experts. Astronaut Franklin Chang-Diaz will help students understand the need for advanced propulsion systems in order to travel the long distance of space. The Expedition Six crew, currently aboard the International Space Station, will tell them what it is like to live and work in space. Finally, NASA Langley's Ed Prior and Robert Braun will help them learn about the Moon and Mars.

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The Case of the Galactic Vacation, is the latest episode in the NASA SCIence Files™ educational series. Designed to introduce students to NASA, programs integrate mathematics, science, and technology through the use of Problem-Based Learning (PBL), scientific inquiry, and the scientific method. The goal is to motivate students to become critical thinkers and active problem solvers, and to introduce students to careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

Each program includes an instructional broadcast, a companion educator's guide, an interactive web site featuring a PBL activity, and a variety of instructional resources. For more information about the NASA SCIence Files™, visit

http://scifiles.larc.nasa.gov

The Arecibo Observatory is an astronomical observatory, and the largest single-dish radio telescope in the world. This instrument, inaugurated in 1963, houses a 1,000-foot spherical reflector consisting of perforated aluminum panels that focus incoming radio waves on movable antenna structures positioned about 500 feet above the reflector surface. The antenna can be moved in any direction, making it possible to track a celestial object in different regions of the sky.

The observatory is operated by Cornell University under a cooperative agreement with the National Science Foundation. Over the years, NASA has provided support and has helped to upgrade the Arecibo Observatory, which is powerful enough to receive signals transmitted by other comparable telescopes located nearly 1,000 light-years away. For more information about the Arecibo Observatory, visit:

http://www.naic.edu

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